

VZCZCXRO3328  
OO RUEHVK  
DE RUEHUL #0831/01 1462150  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 262150Z MAY 09  
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4450  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 6026  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5937  
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 7979  
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 6614  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 3873  
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 4443  
RUEHVK/AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK 1649  
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 3418  
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA SCJS SEOUL KOR  
RHMFIUU/CHJUSMAGK SEOUL KOR

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SEOUL 000831

SIPDIS

STATE FOR OES/IHB, CA/OCS, AND EAP/K  
HHS FOR OGHA  
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TAGS: [CASC](#) [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [KS](#)

SUBJECT: CLUSTER OF INFECTED AMCITS RAISES KOREA'S H1N1 TALLY TO 23,  
OF WHICH 16 ARE AMCITS

REF: SEOUL 729

11. Summary: On May 23, Korea confirmed the first H1N1 diagnosis of an Amcit in Korea; by May 26, the number of infected Amcits in Korea had risen to 16 (of a total of 23 positive diagnoses in Korea). Thirteen Amcit English teachers of 65 recently recruited from the United States and Canada were diagnosed on May 23-25 with novel H1N1 influenza. (An additional two non-Amcit teachers from the same group have also been diagnosed with H1N1.) The remaining 50 individuals, including at least 38 American citizens, are under quarantine. Separately, three U.S.-born children of Korean parents who arrived on a flight from New York on May 24 have been confirmed to be infected with H1N1. In addition, a Korean woman returning to Korea May 24 on a flight from Japan was also diagnosed with H1N1. Following the cluster of three individual cases detected in Korea at the end of April/beginning of May (see REFTTEL), and a Vietnamese transit passenger who was detected with H1N1 on May 17, Korea's total number of confirmed H1N1 infections now stands at 23, of which 16 are American citizens. None of the H1N1 cases in Korea have shown serious illness. End summary.

#### ESL Teaching Recruits under Isolation and Quarantine

12. On May 21, a 23-year-old female American citizen who had entered Korea on May 16 developed a high fever and other flu-like symptoms. She went to a public health center, was tested, and confirmed as having H1N1 influenza on May 22. She was one of 65 English language teachers recently recruited from the United States and Canada by Chungdam Language Institute who had been together in the same classroom and office space for one week. At least 51 of the 65 teaching recruits were Amcits. Embassy's American Citizen Services Unit is working to confirm U.S. nationality and contact those in hospital or quarantine.

13. On May 23, the Korean Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs (MHWFA) began testing all the recruits in the Chungdam program and placing them under quarantine at the Seoul Human Resources Development Center (SHRDC). By May 26, thirteen Amcits among the 65 recruits tested positive for H1N1. They were all moved to the isolation wards of hospitals - five at the National Medical Center, five at the Incheon Medical Center, and three at the Armed Forces Medical Command - all in or around Seoul. Two non-Amcit

teacher recruits also tested positive for H1N1; one is a Korean national who had resided in the United States and the other is a Canadian.

¶4. None of the patients who tested positive for H1N1 have life-threatening symptoms; most have only minor symptoms. All have begun treatment with Tamiflu. The other 50 teaching recruits in the group, including at least 38 Amcits, remain under quarantine at SHRDC where they will be monitored for fever and other symptoms for nine days. They are unhappy about being placed under quarantine, but understand the public health considerations. In the meantime, three of the quarantined Amcits have started blogs about their experiences. The Consular Section's ACS Unit has been in touch with most of the teachers and many of their parents or family members. ACS has pressured MHWFA to improve conditions at the quarantine dormitory. Room phones are being installed and wireless service is once again available, and trash is being picked up after the first cleaning crew reportedly quit over the weekend. Family members who wish to get in touch with relatives under quarantine at SHRDC should call +82-2-3488-2398.

#### Three H1N1-Positive Amcit Children Detected at Airport

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¶5. Separately, three U.S.-born children of Korean parents who arrived on a flight from New York on May 24 were stopped by quarantine officials at Incheon International Airport after showing flu-like symptoms. Their tests came back May 25 confirming H1N1 infection, and they also have been admitted to a hospital and are being treated with Tamiflu. (Note: Because their parents are

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Korean, the children are considered to be Korean citizens by Korean authorities.)

¶6. Also on May 24, a 24-year-old Korean woman returning to Korea on a flight from Japan was stopped by quarantine officials who discovered she had a fever and other flu symptoms. Tests confirmed on May 26 that she was infected with novel H1N1. She has begun a course of Tamiflu and has been placed in hospital isolation.

¶7. Korea's total number of H1N1 infections now stands at 23 - the 19 cases diagnosed over the weekend, a cluster of three individual cases detected at the end of April/beginning of May (see REFTEL), and a Vietnamese transit passenger arriving from Seattle who was detected at Incheon Airport with H1N1 on May 17. The Vietnamese passenger was placed in hospital isolation, given a course of Tamiflu, recovered from her mild symptoms, and is due to be released May 26.

¶8. Comment: The teaching recruits were in Korea for several days before showing any symptoms of infection, but remained within a fairly closed community in dormitories at the language institute and had not yet begun teaching Korean students. It remains to be seen whether MHWFA efforts can contain the virus. MHWFA officials have been helpful and cooperative with the Embassy and have responded relatively quickly to our inquiries, but apparently they have not been very communicative with the teachers in the hospital or under quarantine, leading to frustrations that are apparent on their blogs. We will continue to monitor events, assist the Amcits, coordinate with the MHWFA, and keep the Department informed as the situation unfolds.

STEPHENS